

The concept of atyanta-abhAva

21st September 2024

The concept of atyanta-abhAva

abhAva is an object of anupalabdhi-pramA. It is known through yogyA-anupalabdhi. The yogyatA of anupalabdhi refers to तर्कित-प्रतियोगि-सत्त्व-प्रसञ्जित-प्रतियोगिकत्व. It is important to understand the concept of abhAva because it is understood differently in NyAya and VedAnta. abhAva can be known from anumAna and arthApatti also. However, abhAva known from anupalabdhi-pramANa is necessarily jnAna-karaNa-ajanya whereas abhAva known from anumAna-pramANa and arthApatti-pramANa are jnAna-karaNa-janya (on account of being born from vyApti-jnAna and upapAdya-jnAna respectively).

abhAva is defined in *Tattva Anusandhanam* at page 253 - नजर्योल्लिखितधीविषयोऽभावः, which is further explained as - नजो नशब्दस्यार्थमुल्लिखति विषयीकरोति नजर्योल्लिखिता, सा चासौ धीश्च नजर्योल्लिखितधीस्तस्या विषयोऽभावो, नास्तीतिप्रत्ययवेद्योऽभावः।

Such abhAva is singular and is called atyanta-abhAva. The four abhAvAs accepted in NyAya namely prAk-abhAva, pradhvamsa-abhAva, anyonya-abhAva and atyanta-abhAva are not accepted. This is so because there is no pramANa in abhAva being four-fold.

2. NyAya explanation of four-fold abhAva

prAk-abhAva is defined as अनादिः सान्तः प्रागभावः. This prAk-abhAva is located in kapAla before the manifestation of ghaTa and is the object of pratIti “ghaTo bhavishyati”.

pradhvamsa-abhAva is defined as सादिः अनन्तः प्रध्वंसाभावः. This prdhvamsa-abhAva is located in kapAla after the destruction of ghaTa and is the object of pratIti “ghaTo dhvastah”.

When ghaTa is not present on bhUtala, there is a pratIti, “bhUtale ghaTo nAsti”. This refers to **atyanta-abhAva** which is defined as त्रैकालिकासंसर्गावच्छिन्न-प्रतियोगिताक-अभावः अत्यन्ताभावः and is located in bhUtala.

Even when ghaTa is present on bhUtala, there is a pratIti “bhUtalam na ghaTah”. This shows that the **anyonya-abhAva** of ghaTa is located in bhUtala. This is defined as तादात्म्यसम्बन्धावच्छिन्नप्रतियोगिताकः अन्योन्याभावः.

Thus, even though pratiyogI is identical, on account of four distinct pratIti, one is constrained to admit four abhAva.

3. VedAnta explanation of abhAva

3.1 Model 1

3.1.1 Such a four-fold division of abhAva is illogical. When pratiyogI is identical i.e. ghaTa, then abhAva has to be the same. While ghaTa-abhAva and paTa-abhAva can be accepted to be different on account of difference of pratiyogI, in the case of same pratiyogI, accepting the difference in abhAva is not logical. This is so because pratiyogI is the nirUpaka of abhAva.

Objection: Even when pratiyogI is identical, there can be difference in abhAva on account of difference in pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka. Just as pratiyogI is the nirUpaka of abhAva, pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka is also nirUpaka of abhAva.

Answer: But the pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka i.e. ghaTa-tva is also identical in the four-fold abhAva.

Objection: Yes. By way of the visheshya, the pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka is identical, namely ghaTa-tva. However, on account of visheshaNā thereof, pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka is different. Thus, in our view, visheshaNā-vishishTa-pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka is different and is tabulated as under:

abhAva	pratiyogI	pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka	vishishTa-pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka
ghaTa-prAk-abhAva	ghaTa	ghaTatva	bhavishyat-kAla-sambandhi-ghaTatva

abhAva	pratiyogI	pratiyogitA- avachchhedaka	vishishTa-pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka
ghaTa-pradhvamsa-abhAva	ghaTa	ghaTatva	bhUta-kAla-vishishTa-ghaTatva
ghaTa-atyanta-abhAva	ghaTa	ghaTatva	bhUta-bhavishyat-vartamAna-kAla- avachchhinna-ghaTatva
ghaTa-anyonya-abhAva	ghaTa	ghaTatva	kevala-ghaTatva

Answer: No. If abhAva is accepted to be different on account of difference in pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka, then there will arise the contingency of accepting infinite abhAva. This is so because there are infinite such avachchhedaka of pratiyogitA such as prameya-tva, prithivi-tva, dravya-tva etc. When we have the anubhava - ghaTa is not here - we equally have the anubhava - dravya-ghaTa is not here, prameya-ghaTa is not here, prativI-ghaTa is not here etc.

However, this is not accepted. Therefore, one must accept that abhAva are different only on account of difference in pratiyogI and not on account of difference in pratiyogitA-avachchhedaka.

Objection: But there is clear admission of difference in pratIti by way of ‘ghaTo bhavishyati’ ‘ghaTo dhvastah’, ‘bhUtale ghaTo nAsti’ and ‘bhUtalam na ghaTah’.

On account of difference in pratIti, one must accept the difference in abhAva.

Answer: These different pratIti don’t have prAk-abhAva etc as the vishaya. Because there is no abhAva-vAchaka नञ् शब्द in the mentioned pratIti except in the case of atyanta-abhAva. Accordingly, prAk-abhAva, pradhvamsa-abhAva and anyonya-abhAva cannot be accepted.

3.1.2 prAk-abhAva

The vishaya of pratIti “ghaTo bhavishyati” is not some prAk-abhAva but **the sambandha of ghaTa with bhavishyat-kAla-sattA.**

If one were to admit prAk-abhAva, then it would entail that ghaTa is ‘asat’ prior to its manifestation. And hence, ghaTa can never be produced.

Objection: Just as asat ghaTa cannot be produced, similarly, sat ghaTa cannot be produced either. If ghaTa is already there before its production, then what is the role of kAraNa-vyApAra such as potter, wheel, stick etc?

Answer: Sat ghaTa is present in the form of its cause namely clay. The expression of ghaTa does not take place without kAraNa-vyApAra. Thus, kAraNa-vyApAra is mere abhivyanjaka of sat-ghaTa.

A detailed refutation of prAk-abhAva can be read from <https://sudhanshushekhar.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/concept-of-prak-abhava-in-advaita-vedanta.pdf>

3.1.3 pradhvamsa-abhAva

Similarly, even after destruction, niranvaya-nAsha of ghaTa cannot be accepted as ghaTa remains in its cause kapAla in tirObhUta-form. **The pratIti “ghaTo dhvastah” has such tirObhUta-avasthA as the vishaya.** Or else, this pratIti itself can be bhrama-mUlaka.

3.1.4 anyonya-abhAva

It is not possible to describe the pratiyogI of anyonya-abhAva.

- “bhUtaIam ghaTo na”, this pratIti does not have any virodha of ghaTa. That is, even in the presence of ghaTa, this anyonya-abhAva can be present. However, abhAva is virodhI to its pratiyogI. Hence, ghaTa cannot be said to be the pratiyogI of ghaTa-anyonya-abhAva.
- Further, one cannot say that tAdAtmya is the pratiyogI of ghaTa-anyonya-abhAva. Because tAdAtmya can be either ghaTa-swarUpa or ghaTa-bhinna. If tAdAtmya is ghaTa-swarUpa, then ghaTa being non-contradictory to ghaTa-anyonya-abhAva,

cannot be the pratiyogI as reasoned above. And in case tAdAtmya is accepted as ghaTa-bhinna, then ghaTa-anyonya-abhAva cannot have ghaTa-bhinna as the pratiyogI. In either case, tAdAtmya cannot be the pratiyogI of ghata-anyonya-abhAva.

Further, the pratIti “bhUtaIam ghaTo na” does not have anyonya-abhAva as the vishaya.

Rather, it has the “vyAvahArika-atyanta-abhAva having abheda-of-ghaTa-and-paTa as the pratiyogI” as the vishaya. [*page 257 & 261, Tattva anusandhAnam*]

3.1.5 atyanta-abhAva

3.1.5.1 Thus, the only abhAva remaining is atyanta-abhAva and that is acceptable in VedAnta. This atyanta-abhAva can be pAramArthika or vyAvahArika. While pAramArthika-atyanta-abhAva is necessarily adhikaraNa-swarUpa, vyAvahArika-atyanta-abhAva may be accepted to be different or non-different from adhikaraNa depending on the siddhAnta-prakriyA. The preferred view is that of the identity of atyanta-abhAva with adhikaraNa. This vyAvahArika-atyanta-abhAva is the vishaya of yogyA-anupalabdhi. **The pratIti “bhUtale ghaTo na” has this vyAvahArika-atyanta-abhAva with ghaTa as pratiyogI as the vishaya.**

3.1.5.2 When we say that there is atyanta-abhAva of A in B, there are three entities involved: A (nishedhya), B (adhikaraNa) and AA (nishedha/atyanta-abhAva).

Now, this AA can be of two types. AA-non-contradictory-with-A (AA-1) and AA-contradictory-with-A (AA-2).

This is to be understood as follows:

The “atyanta-abhAva of pot” on the ground is virodhI (contradictory) with “pot”. They cannot be present together. If pot is present, pot-atyanta-abhAva cannot be present and

vice-versa. Thus, pot-abhAva-on-ground is an example of AA-2. This AA-2 is accepted to be either the ground or different from the ground, depending on the siddhAnta-prakriyA.

The "atyanta-abhAva of illusory snake" in the rope is not necessarily contradictory with the "snake". Here, the atyanta-abhAva-of-snake is of two types. AA-1, wherein atyanta-abhAva-of-snake-is-non-contradictory-to-snake. This AA-1 is present along with the snake. This AA-1 is necessarily identical to rope.

AA-2, wherein atyanta-abhAva-of-snake-is-contradictory-to-snake, this AA-2 cannot be present along with the snake. When the illusory snake is seen, this AA-2 is not present. This AA-2 can be either rope or different from rope, depending on the siddhAnta-prakriyA.

So, at time t1, I saw the illusory-snake-in-rope and at time t2, I did not see the illusory snake in rope. At time t1, AA-1 is present in rope along with the snake. AA-2 cannot be present in rope at time t1. At time t2, both AA-2 and AA-1 are present in the rope.

3.1.5.3 So, we saw that AA of A in B can be of two types. AA-non-contradictory-with A (AA-1) and AA-contradictory-with-A (AA-2).

Now, the following are the salient features thereof:

AA-non-contradictory-with-A (AA-1)

1. In the case of snake-rope, AA-1 is necessarily identical with rope.
2. In the case of world-Brahman, AA-1 is necessarily identical with Brahman.
3. AA-1, whether pAramArthika-abhAva or vyAvahArika-abhAva, is necessarily adhikaraNa-swarUpa.

AA-contradictory-with-A (AA-2)

1. In the case of pot-ground, there is no AA-1. All we have is AA-2. And this AA-2 can be either ground or different from ground, depending on the siddhAnta-prakriyA.
2. AA-2 cannot be pAramArthika-abhAva because pAramArthika-abhAva is necessarily AA-1. AA-2 has to be vyAvahArika-abhAva. And hence, it can be

either adhikaraNa-swarUpa or different from adhikaraNa, depending on the prakriyA.

3. In case of snake-abhAva-in-rope, this AA-2 can be either rope or different from rope, depending on the siddhAnta-prakriyA.

3.1.5.4 To illustrate again

In the case of pot-ground, if there is pot-abhAva on the ground, then this pot-abhAva is necessarily contradictory to the pot. And hence this pot-abhAva is AA-2 and vyAvahArika-abhAva. This atyanta-abhAva can be either ground itself or different from the ground, depending on the siddhAnta-prakriyA.

In the case of snake-rope, by the word snake-abhAva, we can mean two types of snake-abhAva. First, snake-abhAva which is contradictory to snake (AA-2) and second, snake-abhAva which is non-contradictory-with-snake (AA-1). The snake-abhAva-which-is-not-contradictory-with-snake (AA-1) is necessarily identical to rope. The snake-abhAva-which-is-contradictory-to-snake (AA-2) can be either rope or different from rope, depending on the siddhAnta-prakriyA.

All the above are so far in srishTi-drishTi-vAda context. In the case of DSV, wherein vyAvahArika-prAtibhAsika division is not admitted, the dream-example is taken.

In the case of dream-snake appearing to be imagined in dream-rope, the snake-abhAva, whether AA-1 or AA-2 are all prAtibhAsika. So, our discussion of vyAvahArika-abhAva/pAramArthika-abhAva would fail. There, we need to see the entire dream-world vis-a-vis Brahman just as we saw AA-1 in SDV above.

3.1.5.5 A tabular representation is as under:

Nature of atyanta-abhAva	atyanta-abhAva-of-A-not- contradictory-to-A (AA-1)	atyanta-abhAva-of-A- contradictory-to-A (AA-2)
vyAvahArika- atyanta-abhAva	Mandatorily adhikaraNa-swarUpa	Either adhikaraNa-swarUpa or different from adhikaraNa
pAramArthika- atyanta-abhAva	Mandatorily adhikaraNa-swarUpa	Not possible

3.1.5.6 In case, where atyanta-abhAva is not accepted to be adhikaraNa-swarUpa, atyanta-abhAva is known from anupalabdhi-pramANa if the abhAva-pramA is jnAna-karaNa-ajanya. It is known from anumAna/arthApatti in case abhAva-pramA is jnAna-karaNa-janya (vyApti-jnAna/upapAdya-jnAna).

In case where atyanta-abhAva is accepted to be adhikaraNa-swarUpa, either anupalabdhi-pramANa is not accepted. Or anupalabdhi-prmANa is accepted to know the adhikaraNa, abhAvatva-prakArakatvena. [न च-एवमनुपलब्धेः पार्थक्येन प्रमाणत्वोक्तिरयुक्ता, प्रमेयानतिरेकादिति - वाच्यम् ; अतिरिक्ताभाववादिमत एवं तदुक्तेः, अतिरिक्ताभावानभ्युपगमेऽपि अभावत्वप्रकारकज्ञाने तत्प्रामाण्योपपत्तेश्च ।]

3.2 Model 2

3.2.1 Following NyAya, sometimes advaita vedAnta also accepts the four-fold division of abhAva and uses it. However, this is a kind of provisional acceptance. This is discussed in anupalabdhi parichchheda of VedAnta ParibhAshA. The same is reproduced as under:

- तत्र मृत्पिण्डादौ कारणे कार्यस्य घटादेरुत्पत्तेः पूर्वं योऽभावः स प्रागभावः । स च भविष्यतीति प्रतीतिविषयः ।
- तत्रैव घटस्य मुद्गरपातानन्तरं योऽभावः स प्रध्वंसाभावः । ध्वंसस्यापि स्वाधिकरणकपालनाशे नाश एव । न च घटोन्मज्जनापत्तिः, घटध्वंसध्वंसस्यापि घटप्रतियोगिकध्वंसत्वात् । अन्यथा प्रागभावध्वंसात्मकघटस्य विनाशे प्रागभावोन्मज्जनापत्तिः । न चैवमपि यत्र ध्वंसाधिकरणं नित्यं तत्र कथं ध्वंसनाश इति वाच्यम् । तादृशमधिकरणं यदि चैतन्यव्यतिरिक्तं तदा तस्य नित्यत्वमसिद्धम् , ब्रह्मव्यतिरिक्तस्य सर्वस्य ब्रह्मज्ञाननिवर्त्यताया वक्ष्यमाणत्वात् । यदि च ध्वंसाधिकरणं चैतन्यं, तदाऽसिद्धिः आरोपितप्रतियोगिकध्वंसस्याधिष्ठाने प्रतीयमानस्याधिष्ठानमात्रत्वात् । तदुक्तम् " अधिष्ठानावशेषो हि नाशः कल्पितवस्तुनः" इति । एवं शुक्तिरूप्यविनाशोऽपीदमवच्छिन्नचैतन्यमेव ।
- यत्राधिकरणे यस्य कालत्रयेऽप्यभावः सोऽत्यन्ताभावः । यथा वायौ रूपात्यन्ताभावः । सोऽपि वियदादिवत् ध्वंसप्रतियोग्येव ।
- 'इदमिदं न' इति प्रतीतिविषयोऽन्योन्याभावः । अयमेव विभागो, भेदः, पृथक्त्वं चेति व्यवह्रियते, भेदातिरिक्तपृथक्त्वादौ प्रमाणाभावात् । अयं चान्योन्याभावोऽधिकरणस्य सादित्वे सादिः, यथा घटे पटभेदः । अधिकरणस्यानादित्वेऽनादिरेव, यथा जीवे ब्रह्मभेदः, ब्रह्मणि वा जीवभेदः । द्विविधोऽपि भेदो ध्वंसप्रतियोग्येव अविद्यानिवृत्तौ तत्परतन्त्राणां निवृत्त्यवश्यम्भावात् ।

3.2.2 Advaita Siddhi, though refuting the fourfold-abhAva as the preferred siddhAnta, provisionally accepts this at some places such as निषेधप्रतियोगित्वानुपपत्त्याऽनिर्वचनीयत्वसमर्थनम्. It is said therein that न च-कपालेऽपि घटध्वंसादिः संबन्धस्थानीयोऽस्तु, एक एवात्यन्ताभावो

व्यवहारयत्विति वाच्यम् ; विलक्षणव्यवहारत्रयानुपपत्त्या दत्तोत्तरत्वात् । In this model, there is a slight modification, wherein the text states the advaita siddhAnta as - वस्तुतस्तु ध्वंसकालेऽपि घटो ध्वस्त इति ध्वंसप्रतियोगिता घटे प्रतीयत एव । तथा चानागतवर्तमानातीतावस्थाः क्रमेणाविर्भावयन् तिरोभावयश्चानिर्वाच्यो घटः कालत्रयेऽप्यनुस्यूत इति नः सिद्धान्तः । As per this, there is anirvachanIya-ghaTa which is present in past, present and future. When we say that “ghaTO dhvastah”, then the nishedha-pratiyogitA is in the present-anirvachanIya-ghaTa-which-is-anusyUta-in-that-time and not in the past-dhvasta-ghaTa. Similarly, when we say “ghaTo bhavishyati”, there nishedha-pratiyogitA is not in the future-vishesha-ghaTa, but in the present-anirvachanIya-ghaTa-which-is-anusyUta-in-that-time. This approach is completely different to that of NyAya. However, this is not the preferred siddhAnta.

References:

For vyAvhArika-abhAva/pAramArthika-abhAva:

https://archive.org/details/yqiG_tattva-anusandhanam-with-advaita-chinta-kaustubam-of-sri-mahadevananda-saraswati/page/n294/mode/1up

For virodhI-atyanta-abhAva and non-virodhI-atyanta-abhAva:

न च-त्वन्मते योग्यत्वमपि ब्रह्मणि मिथ्येति तदत्यन्ताभावोऽपि वाच्यः, तथाच कथं तदत्यन्ताभावानधिकरणत्वमिति वाच्यम् ; योग्यत्वविरोध्यत्यन्ताभावस्य विवक्षितत्वात् , स्वाश्रयनिष्ठात्यन्ताभावस्य मिथ्यात्वप्रयोजकस्य स्वाश्रयनिष्ठत्वेनैवाविरोधित्वात् । [Advaita Siddhi - Brahmanah SwaprakAsha-lakshaNatva-vichArah]